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SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERALISM AND THE CENSUS

Congressman Michael R. Turner, Chairman



OVERSIGHT HEARING

STATEMENT BY MICHAEL R. TURNER, CHAIRMAN

Hearing Topic: *"The Pittsburgh Experience: How has the Community Development Block Grant Program Shaped the Steel City?"*

Monday, July 18, 2005

10:00 a.m.

**Carnegie Municipal Building
Council Chambers
Carnegie, Pennsylvania**

OPENING STATEMENT

Welcome to the Subcommittee on Federalism and the Census' field hearing entitled *"The Pittsburgh Experience: How has the Community Development Block Grant Program Shaped the Steel City?"* This is a follow up to three hearings the Subcommittee has held in Washington, DC on this topic. As a former mayor I understand that in order to comprehend the benefits and shortcomings of national programs, one should go to where the real action takes place. Field hearings allow us to do just that, to reach out to you and hear your views, your concerns and your suggestions.

CDBG is one of the largest federal direct block grant programs in existence. State and local governments use CDBG grant monies to fund various housing, community development, neighborhood revitalization, economic development, and public service provision projects. CDBG is one of the largest federal direct block grant programs in existence. For over thirty years, the CDBG Program has been a critical tool in the arsenal of cities to help create livable communities for individuals and families. Without question, the program provides vital funds for addressing poverty and other community development needs.

However, in recent months, the effectiveness of the program has been called in to question. Much of this scrutiny has been related to the mechanisms used for delivering CDBG funds to grantees and whether those grantees have ultimately spent those funds in the most effective way. That is why we are here in Carnegie, to hear how you, at the local level, have used these funds and how your citizens have benefited from the CDBG program. In general, we are interested in learning from you what works in the program and what does not.

I am very pleased with the response to this hearing especially from the number and quality of witnesses seeking to testify today.

I would like to express my appreciation to the Borough of Carnegie for hosting us today, especially for allowing us to use these Council Chambers today. Moreover, I would like to give my thanks to Congressman Tim Murphy for inviting us to his district and for his efforts to facilitate this hearing.

We have two panels of witnesses before us to help us understand how the CDBG program has benefited the Pittsburgh metropolitan area as well as what can be done better in the future.

Our first panel consists of three witnesses from the national and local elected official perspective. They are the Honorable Pamela Hughes Patenaude, Assistant Secretary for Community Planning and Development at U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; the Honorable Dorothy Kelly, Councilmember for the Borough of Carnegie; and the Honorable Diana Irey, County Commissioner for Washington County, Pennsylvania.

The second panel of witnesses consists of four representatives from the Pittsburgh area community development practitioner community. They are Mr. Stanley "Lou" Gorski, Executive Director of the South Hills Area Council of Governments; Rear Admiral William McGowen, Executive Director Redevelopment Authority of the County of Washington; Mr. William Mitchell, Assistant Director of Planning and Development Westmoreland County Industrial Development Corporation; and Ms. Diana Ritz, Community Development Coordinator for the City of Jeannette, Pennsylvania.

I look forward to the expert testimony our distinguished panel of leaders will provide today. Thank you all for your time today and welcome.

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